

The Bobolink on the Coast of South Carolina.—I regret the misapprehension of my meaning that led to the criticism in the last number of 'The Auk,' p. 179, and the possible inference that I am careless as to my statement of facts. I intended simply to say that the Bobolink in the interior of the State (Chester County) was abundant only in the spring. It did not occur to me that the expression would be interpreted differently, as abundance on the South Carolina coast, in the northward as well as the southward migration, belongs to the common stock of ornithological knowledge of which I could hardly be supposed to be ignorant.—
LEVERETT M. LOOMIS, *Tryon, N. C.*

An Ingenious Pair of House Finches (*Carpodacus frontalis*)—It is generally believed that birds construct their nests year after year and generation after generation after the same plan. There are few observers, however, whose experience does not furnish illustrations of the fact that individual birds are capable of departing from the nest building methods acquired by inheritance, and of resorting to new and ingenious expedients. The following is a case in point, and I am much mistaken if the reader does not conclude that the nest-builders in question possessed a considerable degree of reasoning power as well as of ingenuity.

A pair of California House Finches (*Carpodacus frontalis*) built a nest in the corner of the piazza of a country store. So tame and confiding have these pretty Finches become that I am persuaded that the larger proportion of their nests are built, not in trees and bushes as formerly, but in all sorts of odd nooks and crannies about the house and barn; and even when they are compelled by the lack of facilities to resort to bushes and shrubbery, they choose those as close to the house as possible.

The pertinacity with which the House Finch clings to a chosen nook about a house when their nests are destroyed is amazing, and is equalled only by the English Sparrow. I have known five nests with their contents to be destroyed one after another, and each time the same pair set to work with apparent unconcern to build anew.

But to return to my nest. The proprietor of the store called attention to it, suggesting that if it was of any use to me I had better take it as he was about to destroy it for the reason that the finches were an unmitigated pest in the orchard. This statement, I grieve to say, there is too much reason to believe is true. And great is the pity, for its beautiful song, domestic habits, and pretty plumage give it a place occupied by no other American bird.

Viewed from below, the nest was seen to be balanced rather than firmly placed upon a narrow joist, and I was at a loss to comprehend how it was maintained there even in calm weather, to say nothing of the high winds that prevail in this locality. By means of a step-ladder I was soon able to solve the problem. Having about one-half finished the structure, the birds evidently recognized the insecurity of its position, and the location being in every other respect eligible they hit upon the following remedy.

Procuring a long piece of white string they carried one end well into the body of the nest and twined it around several sticks. Thence it was carried out like a guy rope to a nail that chanced to have been only half driven home, about six inches beyond the outer rim. Two turns were taken about the nail and the string then passed back to the nest and firmly interlaced with the twigs. The nest was then completed.

The string thus attached protected the nest from pitching forward—though the wind rocked it continually—while the wall protected it behind.

The work was not so deftly done as not to betray the novice in the weaving art, and a yearling Oriole might have smiled at the crude effort to steal its trade by its thick-billed relative. However, the evident purpose of *Carpodacus* was to tie down its nest so that it would stay, and appearances were but a secondary consideration. That the nest was securely anchored was evidenced by the fact that it contained five eggs upon which the female was peacefully setting quite regardless of the fact that it was within three feet of the head of every passer by.—H. W. HENSHAW, *Witch Creek, San Diego Co., Cal.*

Leconte's Sparrow (*Ammodramus leconteii*) in large numbers near Charleston, South Carolina.—Since the capture of this bird on January 26, 1886, and again on February 9, 1888, I have failed to detect the presence of this erratic Sparrow until December 6, 1893, when I shot an example in fall moult near Mount Pleasant. The next day I secured six specimens which were all in different stages of moulting. The moult was a slow one and it was not completed until January 15.

From December 6, 1893, to January 24, 1894, I secured forty individuals and could have obtained many more if I had had more time. They were to be found directly on the coast in 'broom grass' fields, which were quite boggy owing to long spells of rainy weather. The majority were shot on wing, but several were shot from the tops of live oak trees where they sought refuge after being repeatedly flushed from the ground. From the whole series only seven males were taken, the remainder being females.—ARTHUR T. WAYNE, *Mount Pleasant, S. C.*

Taming a Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella socialis*).—In the spring of 1891 a Chipping Sparrow built its nest in a honeysuckle vine which covers a stairway and balcony to my studio. It was begun while I was absent from home for a few days, and was on the railing just at the head of the stairs. I therefore avoided the balcony as much as possible until one egg was laid, using an inside entrance from the house.

I then began the experiment of taming the birds, standing for long periods in the doorway until the mother bird would at last go back and forth quite freely to the nest, and would sit upon it while I was there, at a distance of perhaps four feet.

Soon I tried sitting upon the top steps of the narrow stairs, which brought my head on a level with the nest, and it was not long before she also tolerated my presence there. I was so near that we sat and looked into each other's eyes.